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ABSTRACT

The educational advancement of women in India is not perceived as an important characteristic since education is perceived as irrelevant to their roles. The equality of women in status and opportunity is guaranteed in the 1955 Constitution of India and by the government. Although achievements by women in the local and national levels exist, a majority of the women in the rural areas occupy lower positions. The problems for working women are based on economic, social, cultural, and educational factors. To improve this situation, successive Five Year Plans have been instituted by the government to emphasize women's education at the elementary, secondary, and university levels. Some factors which present problems in educational development are found in the decreasing growth rate at the elementary level, an increasing number of dropouts, a high rate of illiteracy, the loss of literacy, and social and cultural attitudes. Some alternatives to the traditional educational approach can be more effective in the education of women. These approaches include functional literacy programs and nonformal education which will enable women to eventually become a vital source of power in the process of national development. (EC)

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EDUCATIONAL ADVANCEMENT AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN INDIA

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New Delhi

EDUCATIONAL ADVANCEMENT AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN INDIA

Perspectives
Problems
Impediments
Concerns

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NEW DELHI

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I. SOME PREMISES

1

Any discussion of education for woman seems somehow to lead to and get submerged in a maze of her social and economic status in society. This is perhaps inevitable since educational disparity is a reflection of several other discriminations. There is, however, one major difference: educational *disparity* augments other disparities and educational *equality* is the single most powerful instrument of overcoming the other disabilities. It is, therefore, necessary to examine the problem of educational advancement of women with a certain degree of detachment from other social and cultural issues, relating to them only to the extent that they determine the quality, thrust and strategy of educational programmes.

2

Legally and constitutionally, educational provisions and facilities *are* available to all women right up to the highest level; there is no legal or constitutional bar preventing them from entering professions and occupations ; nor their cultural and socio-economic participation.

3

Yet a major section of women do not avail of these opportunities. Obviously laws and levers of power cannot work miracles unless women themselves develop the will and the competence to exercise their rights. Education is a powerful means to strengthen this will and this competence.

4

Therefore, what has been *accomplished*, although considerable both as a breakthrough and as attainment, is less than what remains unfinished quantitatively and qualitatively. The task of numbers in the education of women is stupendous enough; when compounded with social inhibitions, traditions, taboos and prejudices, it takes on formidable proportions.

21

5

Developmental processes demand the mobilisation of all available educated and trained man and woman-power. Is this realisable when half the human material is passive and non-participating ? Especially when such non-participation cannot but bring down the quality of participation of the other half also ?

6

But is society prepared for the change in social and family structures that will inevitably follow mass scale women's education ? What hornet's nests will it disturb ? One half of the population, hitherto dumb and acquiescent, waking up to an articulate and questioning role, would loosen up tight social mores, and uproot some close preserves. Is this too daunting a prospect ?

7

It is an irony that one of the chief hurdles against women's education is woman herself. Most women, especially in rural areas, do not see the relevance of education to their daily lives or to their traditional role, primarily a biological one, which, in the average woman's view, calls for no special educational equipment.

Can education help to disabuse her of this mis-conception ? How can it make her aware of the socio-economic complexities of modern life, which demand more of men and women than living and begetting ? How can education make her conscious of the fact that she is more than someone's daughter, someone's wife and Some one's mother, that she has her own independent personality, with her own ideas, thoughts and value systems to contribute to the total ethos of society ? And that it is neither fair to herself nor to society to allow herself to be a non-person ? This is both the justification and the goal of education for women.

8

There is a prevalent notion among men and women alike that education of girls is a luxury which can be indulged in only when other priorities have been met. In a choice between educating a boy and educating a girl, in nine cases out of ten, the boy wins. If the choice were between one kind of a school and another, the boy is sent to the better institution, and so it is all the way down. The left-over, the second-rate is the girl's share.

This attitude is directly related to accepted non-economic role concepts of a girl. The marriage of a girl is just as expensive whether she is educated

or not. Parents, therefore, wish to save on her education to spend on her marriage. Besides, the girl once married, moves away from the parents' home, taking her economic capacity with her, whereas investment in a boy's education brings direct dividends back into the family. These two reasons are sufficient disincentives for the average parents from educating their daughters. To dislodge such deep-rooted patriarchal attitudes calls for powerful social education and action—consciously planned and doggedly pursued with several governmental and non-governmental agencies and the media working in concerted action.

9

The educated women are not yet a sizeable force to make an impact on other women and society. The pace of education would have to be greatly accelerated to reach that critical proportion where women can make a tangible contribution. What will be this critical level? in absolute number? in percentage? in educational level?

10

Where do we attack the problem of women's education ? At breaking down social attitudes, and thereby making education more acceptable? Or, on the education front and thereby try to break down social attitudes ? By enlarging conventional educational facilities to deprived sections of the society and to those who have not been reached? Or, by elaborating new paths to learning and by adopting imaginative and non-traditional educational strategies and programmes ? Obviously, there can be no time-sequence between the two, and the battle will have to be waged on both fronts simultaneously.

* * *

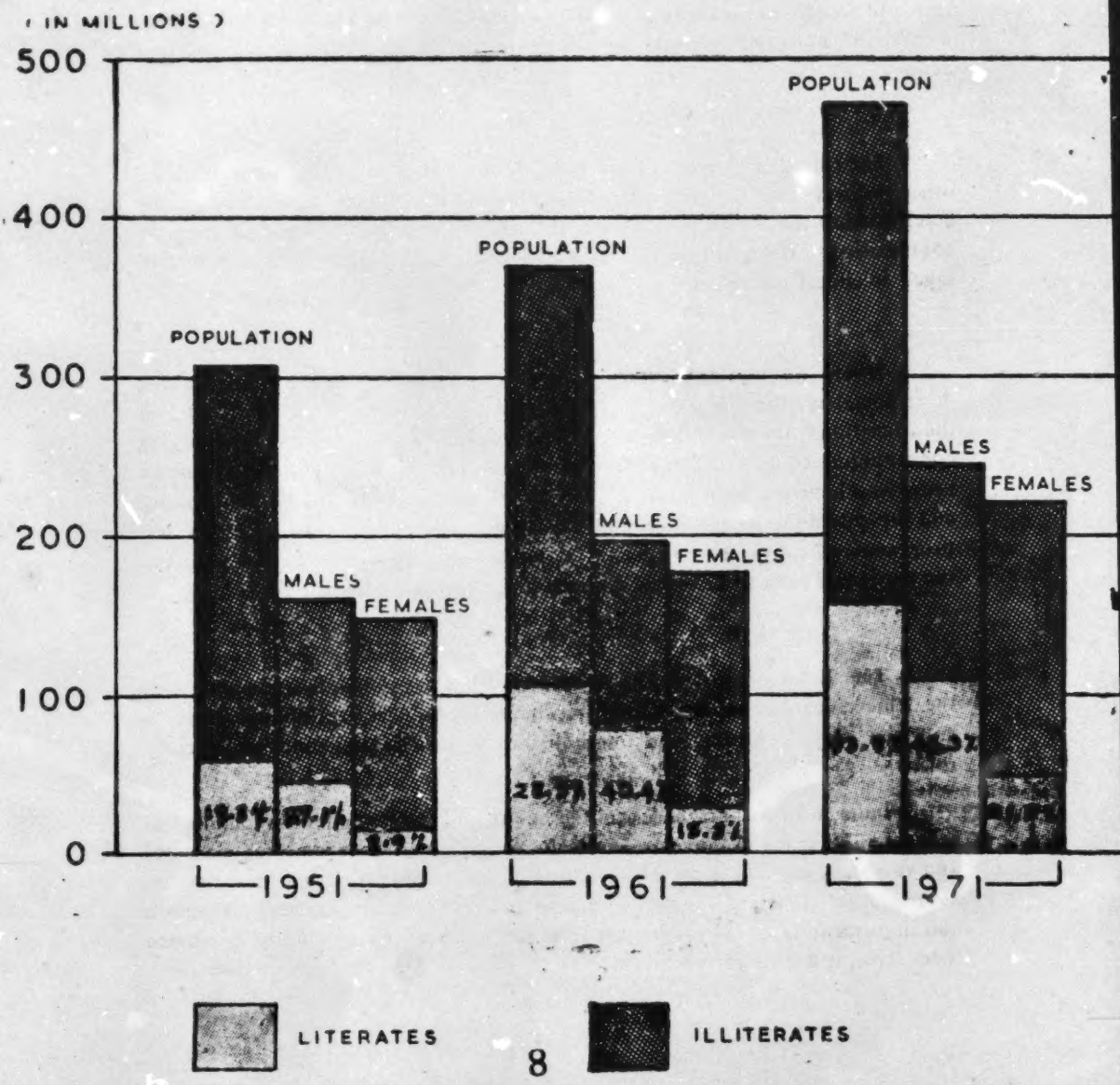
The Indian scene, in the last few decades, has shown in a concrete form the achievements and shortcomings, results and obstacles, traditional patterns and new ways regarding the upgrading of women's social status and societal role.

India, with its human magnitude, cultural richness and wide sociological canvas, offers many examples of successful programmes, governmental measures and voluntary activities. At the same time it also offers proof that these actions alone are not sufficient and that a continuing fight for their practical realisation and implementation by progressive social forces, more particularly by women themselves, is a constant necessity.

POPULATION OF LITERATES, MALES AND FEMALES

(EXCLUDING AGE GROUP 0 TO 4)

(1951 TO 1971)



II. WOMEN'S EQUALITY AND OPPORTUNITY

The Constitution of India (1951) guarantees to all its citizens "equality of status and opportunity", and "equality of opportunities to all citizens in matters relating to employment and appointments in any office under the State" and forbids "discrimination in respect of any employment in office under the State on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of work, residence or any one of them". Women enjoy these rights, and benefit from the protections as much as men. The founding fathers of the Constitution envisaged the realisation of a new social order wherein every citizen, man and woman, would have equal opportunity of social economic, and political participation.

Various laws have been enacted to give equal rights to women in respect of marriage, divorce, inheritance, and franchise and to help women overcome their disabilities: child marriage was abolished more than 40 years ago; the unequal law of inheritance among the Hindus was changed in 1955 after marathon efforts; currently the Hindu Marriage Act is being radically amended to make divorce easier; dowry is prohibited by law and is a punishable offence.

Several efforts have been made by the State to make the Constitutional dream a reality and to translate the legal provisions into day-to-day practice; to bring woman out of her domestic preoccupation into the main stream of socio-economic life of the country; to enable her to enjoy a share in the country's progress as much as in the responsibility for achieving that progress; to play a decision-making part in society instead of her traditionally passive and acquiescent role.

Several high-powered committees have been set up at intervals to examine the problems that come in the way of the realisation of these goals and to suggest measures to overcome them. A committee on the Status of Women was constituted by the Government of India a few years back to examine the constitutional, legal and administrative provisions that have a bearing on the social status of women, their education and employment; to assess the impact of these provisions on the status of women in the country particularly in the rural sector; to examine the development of education among women and to determine the factors responsible for the slow progress in some areas and suggest remedial

measures; to survey the problems of working women including the discrimination in employment and remuneration etc. The Committee has in its report given far reaching and exhaustive suggestions regarding the status of women. These are being examined for further action.

The International Women's Year has helped to focus public attention on the problems relating to women's status including women's education, and accelerate legislative, legal and executive measures to overcome them. A national Committee under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister of India has been set up to launch various programmes for women's advancement during the year.

The impact of all these measures is visible today: the Indian woman is participating in an increasing measure in the national and international spheres. She has entered practically every professional and academic field; over 20,000 highly qualified women occupy positions as doctors, architects, writers, artists, and administrators; there are nearly 23,000 women teachers in universities and 94,000 graduate teachers in schools; women have entered elected bodies—Panchayats, municipal corporations, State assemblies, and Parliament.

But all that is only one side of the picture, albeit a gratifying one. There is still a long way to go before the full equality enshrined in the Constitution can be stated to be a universally practised reality. There is still too great a gap between objectives and achievements, between what rights and protections legal and Constitutional provisions confer, and what practice achieves.

The rights acquired with so much effort remain ineffective for a large proportion of women, steeped in ignorance, traditions and social taboos, many of which are anachronistic and often cruel. Few women, indeed, are aware of these legal rights, nor have they the willingness, knowledge, skill or even freedom to make use of them : child marriages still go on merrily in rural India and sometimes even in urban India; the dowry system is practised with impunity; the exercise of franchise is often vitiated by ignorance of the issues on which elections are contested.

While a few women occupy high positions at the apex, large numbers at the base of the pyramid are in lowly disadvantaged positions, being relegated to a 'twilight' world of home, hearth and child rearing. The participation of women in social, economic and political development is still disporportionate compared to their potentiality ; their participation in policy making and managerial levels is marginal. Out of 524 members of the Lok Sabha (Lower House of Parliament) only 25 are women and in the Rajya Sabha (the Upper House) there are only 18 women out of 241 members. This is more or less the situation in State assemblies also.

As against 2.8 million men with university degress, only 7,00,000 are women. Out of them only 1,50,000 are employed, the rest representing trained talent gone to seed. Even this group of educated working women forms only 2.5 per cent of all employed women; the proportion of working women to the total working population is only about 19 per cent and most of them are in the agricultural sector, or in unskilled jobs, where their exploitation is the greatest, and equal pay for equal work does not always exist. (A draft bill is currently under consideration to ensure that all women workers in ths industrial and agricultural sectors receive equal pay for equal work as men).

Several factors—social, cultural and economic—contribute to this situation not the least of which is the fact that traditional concepts, beliefs and prejudices are often times in conflict with the socio-economic and socio-political goals of a modernising society. One of the main causes lies in women's ignorance borne out of and nourished by lack of education. It is a vicious circle : traditional concepts and mis-concepts about woman's place and role shut off access to education ; lack of education in turn further strengthens feudal values, and outdated attitudes.

III. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES

All advances and improvements in women's status lead and must lead to the enlargement and expansion of women's participation in the public life, particularly in economic activities and various social actions. Therefore, one of the prime goals of women's education, as important as their individual advancement and enrichment of their lives, is to equip them to participate in economic activities with knowledge and competence.

The problem of raising the degree and level of women's participation in economic activities is complex, and goes much beyond mere provision of education and training, and extends into many ramifications of social and cultural attitudes and economic and social situations. An understanding of the structure and characteristics, weaknesses and disabilities of working women is, therefore, necessary to help in formulating appropriate strategies for realising these socio-economic and educational objectives.

Women's participation in economic activities outside the home has increased considerably in the post-independence period. Although there are still varying degrees of reluctance to such participation, growing economic necessity as well as the general social-political situation and climate, have begun in recent times to wear down the resistance, particularly among those who have been most exposed to education.

Non-working Women

Non-workers form the majority of women (88.3%), the largest number being accounted for by household duties. The Table No. 1 gives the distribution of non-working women by type of activity :

Table 1 : Non-working women by activities in 1971

Main activity	*No. of females*	*Percentage of total*
Full time students	20,664	8.9
Household duties	118,404	51.0
Dependents and infants	91,772	39.5
Retired rentiers and persons of independent means	477	0.2
Beggars, vagrants Inmates of penal, mental and charitable institutions and others.	838	0.4
Total	232,155	100.0

Thus a bulk of women are non-participants in economic activities outside the home and they are neither equipped nor socially conditioned to do so. The consequence of the situation on the pace and quality of national development can well be surmised.

Working Women

According to 1971 census, out of 264 million women, only 31 million (11.9%) were women workers—28 million (13%) in rural areas and 3 million(7%) in urban areas. Even in the larger cities, working women constituted not more than 9%.

Table 2 : **Distribution of Female Workers, 1951-1971**

Year	*Agriculture*	*Industry*	*Services*	*Total*	*Female workers %*	*% to total labour*
	Figures in thousand					
1951	31,062	4,554	4,923	40,539	23.00	28.98
	(76.8)	(11.2)	(12.01)	(100)		
1961	47,274	6,884	5,244	59,402	27.96	31.53
	(79.6)	(11.6)	(8.8)	(100)		
1971	25,060	3,307	2,931	31,298	11.86	17.35
	(80.1)	(10.5)	(9.0)	(100)		

Note : Figures within brackets denote percentage of women workers.

Decline in Women Labour Employment

There has been a distinct decline in the percentage of employment of women in the decade 1961-1971; while the number of men workers *increased* by 15.2 per cent, that of women *declined* by 41.4 per cent.

Some part of this can be accounted for by the definition of workers adopted by the Census which tends to ignore the inter-changeable role of women as housewives and gainful workers. (For example nearly 2.3 million women are classified as non-workers whose main activity is housework, but who are engaged in some secondary activities in rural and urban areas). Nevertheless, the decline in economic activity of women is still of considerable magnitude. This trend is largely due to, (a) the replacement of domestic industries by organised industries which employ less female labour, (b) the technological change and rationalisation of production processes which reduces the demand for unskilled labour. A majority of women being unskilled workers find themselves in least demand.

Women Workers in Unorganised Sector

About 94 per cent of women workers are engaged in the unorganised sector of the economy, of whom 81.4 per cent are in agriculture. They are affected by all the problems that spring from the unorganised sector of any industry: they are outside the reach of most laws that seek to protect the security and working conditions of labour: there are no strong labour organisations to safeguard their interests.

Unpaid workers

More than half of the women who enter the labour force before the age of 15 are unpaid as they participate in family occupation. In rural India they constitute between 41 to 49 per cent of female labour force.

Wage Discriminations

The Minimum Wages Act of 1948, tries to reduce discrimination in wages in agriculaural labour. But there has been an uneven progress in its implementation in different States. The reasons lie largely in the poverty and illiteracy of agricultural labour, the casual nature of their employment, ignorance of the law, all of which apply particularly to women. Because of these handicaps, agricultural labour as a whole and women in particular are not able to employ methods available to industrial labour to improve their bargaining power resulting in considerable disparity in wages between men and women. This, of course, varies in extent from State to State.

Education and Training of Working Women

The problems of working women are thus very complex. Various factors contribute to this situation : some are economic, which limit the creation of new employment facilities both for men and women, but particularly for the latter; some are socio-cultural, since the attitude of the society as a whole are still not sufficiently favourable to the economic emancipation of women; and some are educational because existing educational facilities have neither reached a large portion of women population nor given to all those who receive some formal education the real knowledge and weapon for improving their situation.

Lack of formal education and training causes large scale displacement and restricts mobility of women workers; out of school and adult education programmes have limited coverage of women workers; workers' education programmes often neglect the needs of women; consequently women workers are unable to adjust themselves to new methods of production resulting form modernising technologies. This restricts them to certain jobs and at certain levels and rarely allows them to enter higher levels of the production process. Opportunities for acquiring new training when a new process is introduced are limited. Lack of education keeps them out of communication with what happens in the world outside.

It is in this context—socio-political, economic, socio-cultural—that the past educational achievements, present needs and future strategies have to be understood and appreciated.

IV: PROGRESS IN GIRLS' AND WOMEN'S EDUCATION

Recognising the importance of education as a means of bringing about a reduction in inequality under which women suffer, sucessive Five Year Plans have consistently placed special emphasis on the acceleration of women's education to prepare her for multiple role in society. The First Five Year Plan (1951-56) stated :

> "that the general purpose and objective of women's education cannot be different from the purpose and objective of men's education... At the secondary and even at the university stage women's education should have a vocational or occcpational bias".

This emphasiss continue to govern educational policies and programmes for women to this day. The achievement of various levels of the formal system since independence is shown in the following table.

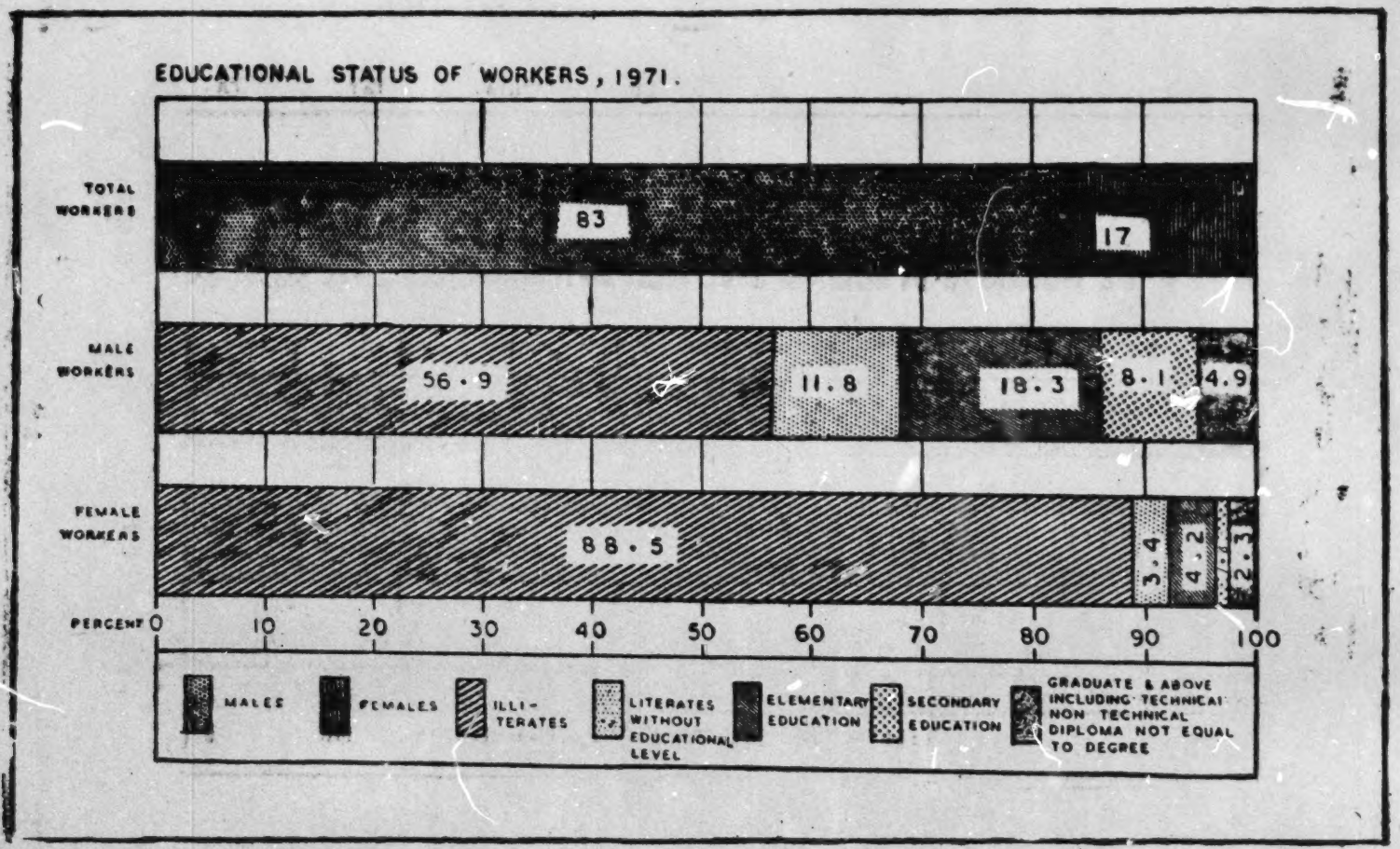
Table 3 : **Education of Girls and Women in the Post-Independence Period**

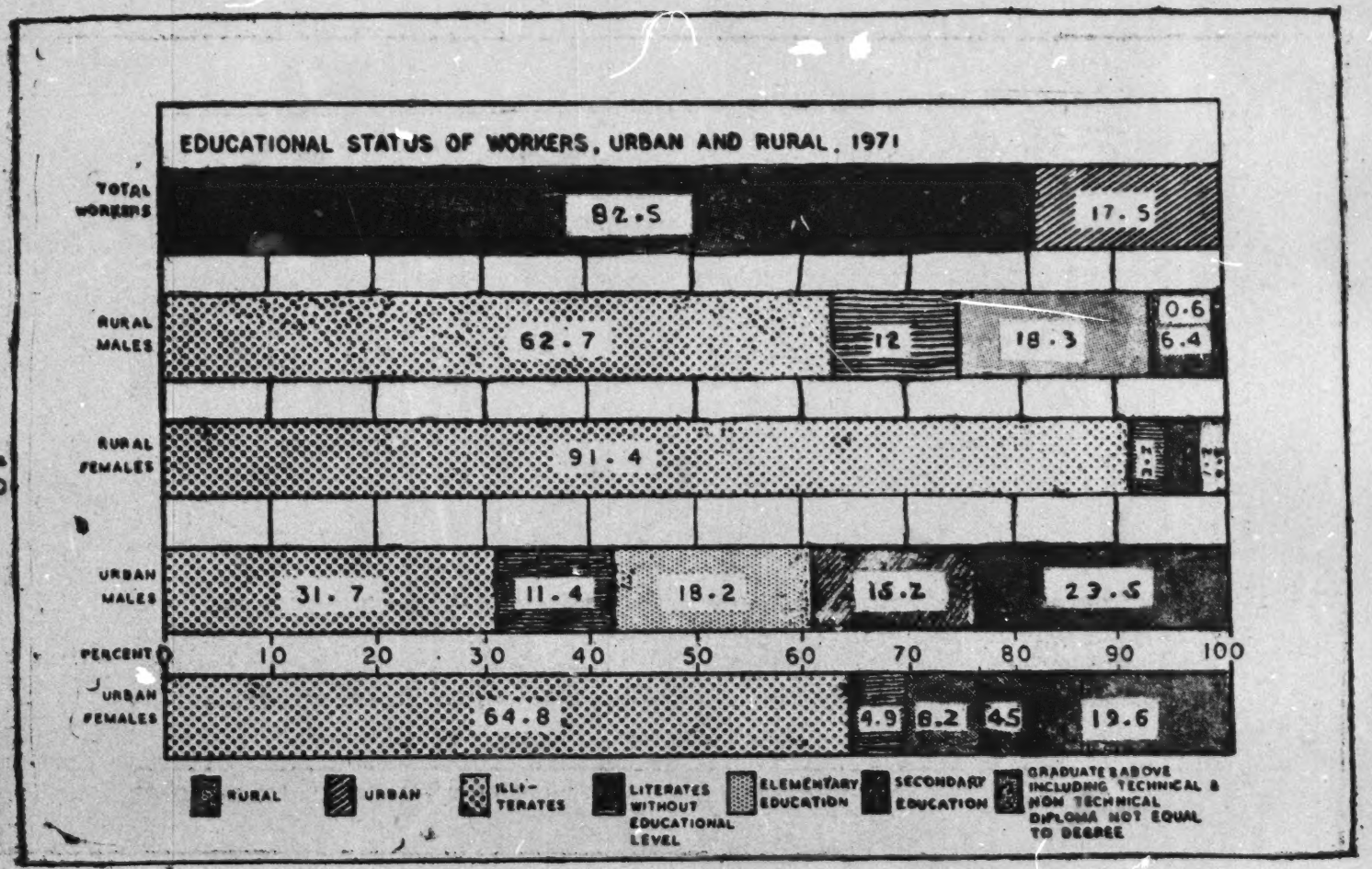
(in millions)

Year	Enrolment of girls in			
	Primary School classes (I-V) (age 6-11)	*Middle School classes (VI-VIII) (age 11-14)*	*Secondary School classes (IX-XI) (age 14-17)*	*Colleges & Universities (General Education) (age 17+)*
1946-47 (at independence)	34.75 (36)	0.322 (22)	0.281 (14)	0.020 (12)
1950-51	5.385 (39)	0.534 (20)	0.19 (15)	0.040 (14)
1960-61	11.347 (48)	1.67 (32)	0.56 (23)	0.150 (22)
1973-74 (Estimated)	20.40 (62)	4.54 (43)	2.34 (36)	0.900 (31)
1971-79 (Projected target)	81.89 (69)	7.35 (51)	3.17 (39)	1.600 (34)

(Figures in brackets indicate number of girls for every 100 boys enrolled).

Source :—Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, 1974, vol. II, Chapter 6, Table V.


EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF WORKERS, 1971.
TOTAL WORKERS
MALE WORKERS
FEMALE WORKERS
83
17
56.9
11.8
18.3
8.1
4.9
88.5
3.4
4.2
2.3
PERCENT
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
80
90
100
MALES
FEMALES
ILLI-TERATES
LITERATES WITHOUT EDUCATIONAL LEVEL
ELEMENTARY EDUCATION
SECONDARY EDUCATION
GRADUATE & ABOVE INCLUDING TECHNICAL NON TECHNICAL DIPLOMA NOT EQUAL TO DEGREE


EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF WORKERS, URBAN AND RURAL, 1971
TOTAL WORKERS
82.5
17.5
RURAL MALES
62.7
12
18.3
0.6
6.4
RURAL FEMALES
91.4
URBAN MALES
31.7
11.4
18.2
16.2
23.5
PERCENT
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
80
90
100
URBAN FEMALES
64.8
4.9
8.2
4.5
19.6
RURAL
URBAN
ILLI-TERATES
LITERATES WITHOUT EDUCATIONAL LEVEL
ELEMENTARY EDUCATION
SECONDARY EDUCATION
GRADUATE ABOVE INCLUDING TECHNICAL & NON TECHNICAL DIPLOMA NOT EQUAL TO DEGREE

Elementary Education

Two significant facts are noticeable—as a result of deliberate policy and sustained effort :

One, regarding *the universal provision* of educational facilities for children in age-group 6-11, since it can be stated that there is now a primary school within easy walking distance from the home of every child:

Second, regarding the *increase* of girls' enrolment, which has been growing *at a faster rate* than those of boys, thereby gradually narrowing the existing discrepancy :

Table 4 : **Rate of Increase of Girls' Enrolment in Primary Education (classes I-V)***

Year	*Girls (millions)*	*Boys (millions)*	*Proportion*
1950-51	5.38	13.77	1 : 2.55
1960-61	11.40	23.357	1 : 2.07
1968-69	20.18	34.21	1 : 1.70
1973-74	24.40	39.35	1 : 1.61

Nevertheless, the Directive Principle of the Constitution which envisaged that free and compulsory education for *all* children until they complete the age of 14 years should be provided by 1960, has proved elusive. By the end of the Fourth Five Year Plan (1973-74), the percentage of enrolment in the age-group 6-11 was 83.9 (boys 100.2, girls 66.4) and in 11-14 was 35.6 (boys 48.3, girls 22.2). It is now hoped to achieve this long deferred goal by 1978-79 (the end of the Fifth Plan) in the age-group 6-11 and by 1983-84 in the age-group 11-14.

At the same time stress has to be laid more on the education of girls. As the Fifth Five Year Plan has observed, "in spite of substantial progress in educational expansion, targets laid dowd for enrolment have registered a shortfall both in elementary and secondary levels but has exceeded at the higher education level. The shortfalls have been particularly large at the elementary education level, more so in the case of the girls." This comes out clearly from the following table :

*Source : Draft Fifth Five Year Plan, Vol. II, Government of India, Planning Commission, 1974, p. 197.

Table 5 : Enrolment of Children of the Age-Group 6-14 in Classes I-VIII*

Year	Enrolment as percentages of population in the :					
	age-group 6-11 classes I-V			age-group 11-14 classes VI-VIII		
	boys	girls	Total	boys	girls	Total
1950-51	59.8	24.6	42.6	20.7	4.5	12.7
1955-56	70.3	32.4	52.9	25.4	6.9	16.5
1960-61	82.6	41.4	62.4	33.2	11.3	22.5
1965-66	96.3	56.5	76.7	44.2	17.0	30.9
1968-69	93.0	57.0	75.8	45.0	18.0	31.9
1973-74	100.2	66.4	83.9	48.3	22.2	35.6

There is thus still a long way to go before universal enrolment can be achieved for girls in the age-group 6-11, particularly so in the age-group 11 to 14.

Secondary Education

At this stage, 2.34 million girls are enrolled currently or 12 per cent of the population in the age-group 14-17 (as against 31 per cent for boys).

Table 6 : Expansion of Secondary Education**

Year	Enrolment (in million)			Percentage of age-group14-17		
	boys	girls	Total	boys	girls	Total
1950-51	1.02	0.19	1.21	8.8	1.7	5.4
1955-56	1.65	0.33	1.98	13.0	2.8	8.0
1960-61	2.47	0.56	3.03	17.5	4.3	11.1
1965-66	4.08	1.20	5.28	25.6	7.9	17.0
1968-69	5.09	1.74	6.83	29.0	10.0	20.0
1973-74 (anticipated)	6.16	2.34	8.50	31.0	12.0	22.0

*Source : Draft Fifth Five Year Plan, vol. II, Government of India, Planning Commission, 1974, p. 194.

**Source : Draft Fifth Five Year Plan, vol. II, Government of India, Planning Commission, 1974, p. 196.

Secondary education even today is largely confined to the upper and the middle classes in urban areas. In the rural areas, it is mainly taken advantage of by the more well-to-do families. There is thus a discrepancy between rural and urban areas regarding the utilisation of secondary school facilities. This can be seen from the following table :

Table 7 : Percentage Distribution of Enrolment of Boys and Girls in Secondary Education between Urban and Rural Areas 1971*

Area	*Percentage enrolment of*		
	Boys	*Girls*	*Total*
Rural	83.42	16.58	100.00
Urban	71.31	28.69	100.00
Total	76.64	23.36	100.00

University Stage

At the university stage, the total enrolment in general education is about 9,00,000 or 1.3 per cent of the age-group 17-23 (about 31 girls for every 100 boys enrolled).** The proportion of women to men is higher at the post-graduate than at the under-graduate level and this is a continuing trend. In professional education, women have substantial enrolments in teaching, medicine and fine arts, but enrolment in other areas is not so high. Higher education among girls is largely confined, even more than secondary education, to urban upper and middle classes.

Overall Situation

In spite of all these efforts and the not insignificant achievement registered, a great majority of Indian women are illiterate ; a large portion of those who are literate are without any educational level which means that they are in reality semi-literate; and only a small fraction is educated.

*Source :—Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, 1974, vol. II, Chapter VI, Table VIII.

**Source :—Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, 1974, vol. II, Chapter VI, para 6, 21.

The following table gives a picture of the educational levels of literate women :

Table 8 : Distribution of Literates by Educational levels (1971)*

Educational level	*Total*	*Male*	*Female*
Total literates	100.0	100.0	100.0
Literates without educational level	36.9	35.4	40.3
Literates with educational level	63.1	64.6	59.7
Primary	31.5	30.5	34.2
Middle	18.0	18.8	16.0
Matriculation or higher secondary	11.0	12.3	7.8
Non-tech. diploma or certificate not equal to degree	0.1	0.1	0.1
Technical diploma or certificate not equal to degree	0.3	0.3	0.2
Graduates and above	2.2	2.6	1.4

There are many-sided favourable factors behind these positive achievements : political (particularly the political will to develop educational facilities and to maximise educational efforts); economic (more specifically the perspective of improving the personal or family situation by education and training) ; psychological (particularly the motivational aspects for girls and women to open larger doors of knowledge and skills) ; etc.

But what are, at the same time, the obstacles and hindrances which are basically responsible for the discrepancy between expectations and achievements in women's education ?

*Source : Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, 1974, vol. II, Chapter VI, Table 29.

V. PROBLEMS AND IMPEDIMENTS

The experience, achievements and non-achievements of the past 27 years hold some concrete implications for future strategies and approaches.

Growth Rate

The study of the trends in the growth rates of enrolment (both of boys and girls) shows that it has not been possible to maintain the same growth rate constantly. While there was a continuing increase of enrolment at all levels, both in absolute figures and in percentage of the target group—there was a decline in the growth rate, if comparison is made between the first and the second part of the last decade:

Table : 9 **Quinquennial Growth in Enrolment by Stages of Education—During the Decade 1970's***

(in percentage)

Stage	*1960-61 to 1965-66*			*1965-66 to 1970-71*		
	Quinquennial growth rate			*Quinquennial growth rate.*		
	Boys	*Girls*	*Total*	*Boys*	*Girls*	*Total*
Primary	34.9	56.1	41.8	20.6	30.7	24.2
Secondary	49 7	70.6	54.7	18.2	30.5	21.5
Univertity	76.3	119.4	83.5	57.4	78.4	61.5
Professional and special schools	16.5	74.6	1.6	3.6	34.6	9.3
All stages	37.1	60.1	44.0	20.5	31,5	24.2

At the primary stage the growth rate was 56.1 per cent in the first quinquennium of the decade 1960-61 to 1970-71, and 30.7 per cent during the second. The corresponding figures at the secondary level were 70.6 per cent and 30.5 per cent

*Source : Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, 1974 Volume II, Chapter 6, Table XI.

at the university level 119.4 per cent and 78.4 per cent and in the professional education 74.6 per cent and 34.6 per cent. Taxing all stages of education to gether, the enrolment growth rate was 60.1 per cent during 1960-61 to 1965-66 and 31.5 per cent in 1965-66 to 1970-71.

These trends would appear to indicate that future educational development cannot be simply based on the extrapolation of previous trends, nor can future educational strategies be a linear expansion of the existing ones. New ways, modalities and means have to be found and carefully elaborated if educational benefits have to be placed at the disposal of much larger sections of the deprived sections of the society, of various categories of the working groups, of socially and economically backward sections of women's population.

2. Drop-outs and Wastages

Efforts to universalise primary education have been daunted by one major factor, namely, the phenomenon of drop-outs. This applies to boys and girls alike, particularly those drawn from rural areas and from the less privileged sections of society. In the case of the girls, it is even more accentuated. A recent study has shown that between classes I-II, the drop-out rate is as high as 42.85 per-cent. It is 12.12 per cent between classes II and III, 8.5 per cent between classes III and IV and 7.88 per cent between classes IV and V.

Several reasons cause this wastage, the chief of which are social and economic. In the case of girls, social factors like marriage and parental apathy to girls' education also play a major part. About 25-30 per cent of wastage among girls falls under this category.

3. Progress of Literacy

For all the expansion accomplished through the formal system, a vast majority of women are still illiterate.

This is apparent when it is seen that literacy among women was only 21.5 per cent (excluding age-group 0-4) as against 45.3 per cent of men.

In rural areas, where nearly 220 million women live, female literacy was only 13.2 per cent, while in urban areas, it was 42.3 per cent. This situation of course, varies considerably from State to State, some States having a high literacy rate both in rural and urban areas, while others have a low literacy rate. Out of 352 districts in India, women's literacy rate in rural areas was less than 5 per cent in 83 districts and ranged from 5 to 10 per cent in another 113 districts.

The situation is particularly unfavourable in the age-group 15-24 as the table below will indicate:

Table 10 : **Educational levels of Women***

(figures in millions)

Educational level	*No. of women in*		*Total*
	Urban areas	*Rural areas*	
	(Age-group 15-24)		
Illiterate	3.6	26.2	29.8 (67.5% of the total number of women in this age-group).
Literate	0.7	2.1	2.8
Primary & middle level	3.5	5.2	8.7
Matriculate and above	2.0	0.7	2.7 (6.2% of the total number of women in this age-group).
Total of literate and educated	6.2	8.1	14.3

As will be seen from the table above, less than 7 per cent of women in the age-group 15-24 are covered under the formal system. In the age-group 25 and above, the percentage drops even further down to below 2 per cent.

The progress of literacy among women during the period 1951-71 could be seen from the following figures:

Table 11 : **Progress of Literacy—1951-1971**
Number of Literate Females per 1000 Males**

(figures *include* age group 0-4)

Year	*Total literate males*	*percentage of literate males to total male population*	*Total literate females*	*percentage of literate female to total female population*	*No. of literate females per 1000 males*
1951	45,610,431	24.95	13,650,683	7.93	299
1961	77,939,833	34.44	27,578,928	12.95	354
1971	111,911,000	39.51	48,6,99191	18.44	435

**Source* : Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, 1974, Volume II, Chapter 6 Table XVIII.

***Source* . Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India, 1974, Volume II, Chapter 6 Table XIX.

Literacy among women has increased at a higher growth rate than among men; however it has not increased at an adequate pace either in absolute numbers or in relation to the male literacy level (still the proportion is roughly 2:5, between female and male literacy).

Loss of Literacy

Even among the literate women, the educational and other skills gained by them are often insignificant and temporary and are not of sufficient standard to be retained. Two factors contribute to relapse into illiteracy or loss of literacy skills gained : (a) the lack of opportunity to use literacy gained in occupational activities and life situations ; and (b) the lack of recognition of the value of literacy in the community as well as in the family. For obvious reasons, these factors operate in a much stronger degree in the case of women in rural areas.

Some Major Hindrances

(a) Social and Cultural : Social and cultural attitudes towards the education of girls are the most formidable blocks. They range from acceptance to indifference and sometimes even resistance. Acceptance of the need for girls' education is particularly lacking in rural areas. Among the upper classes, when it is accepted, it is more as an embellishment and a status symbol than as a preparation for social responsibility. Many do not see the need for it or its relevance to their economically and socially comfortable lives. Among the middle classes who have been hit hard by economic pressures and rising costs, girls' education registers the highest acceptance. To this class, it has become an increasing source of economic improvement. The lower income groups would also like to educate their girls out of economic necessity, but a large majority find it difficult to do so because of lack of resources.

A second set of social resistance arises out of certain fears and misconceptions. Parents, particularly in rural areas, often fear that the education of girls might alienate them for their traditions and social values and lead to conflicts, maladjustments and non-conformism.

Early marriage or betrothal hastens early withdrawal of girls from schools before they have achieved a reasonable level of education. Social restrictions on girls pursuing their studies after marriage is a further inhibiting factor.

However, there is a gradual decline in all these attitudes, hindrances and obstacles.

(b) Economic : A large majority of girls especially in rural areas are required to work at a very early age in various demestic chores: looking after

siblings, tending cattles, or contributing to the family income by their own labour. The prevalence of child labour among girls belonging to lower income groups is a great deterrent to the spread of education among girls.

(c) **Pedagogical** : The curriculm is largely irrelevant to the interests, needs and attitudes of girls, particularly in rural areas. This acts as a de-motivating factor in the enrolment of girls. The present system of education does not really prepare girls for economic participation in later life.

The school timings and physical location are often unsuitable and inflexible. They are either too far away from their residence, or the facilities in the schools are inadequate and unsuitable for girls. In some areas the lack of separate girls' schools or of a woman teacher in co-education school acts as a further diterrent.

(d) **Other disparties** : The problem is further complicated by the wide disparties and imbalance in educational development between one State and another, between different geographical areas and between different social strata. Sucq imbalances reflect the variations in attitudes to women, and the discrepancies in economic and social conditions.

Any plan for educational development of women has to take these imbalances into account and devise strategies for their removal in order to bring all women within the access of educational opportunities.

VI. NEW EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES

From the pace of development of girls education and the dimensions and complexity of the problems involved, it is obvious that new departures and strategies will need to be adopted, if the large bulk of women are to be brought more rapidly into the main stream of national life. Obviously, the formal system of education is by itself able to cater to the needs of only a small proportion of women and even that in a limited way. It is not equipped to meet the special needs, peculiar circumstances, and range of vocational and professional requirements of large sections of women.

Alternatives to the formal system are, therefore, needed which will offer *several paths* to education and training, *adapted to the needs* of specific categories of women, *closely linked to the social, cultural and economic milieu* in which they live and work.

This is a new direction in which women's education is moving in India. Some limited experience, available already, is sufficient to indicate its validity and adaptations and diversifications needed.

The needs of four major categories of women will have to be met by appropriate programmes :

- girls in the age-group 6-14 ;
- illiterate and semi-literate working women in the age-group 15 and above in the organised and unorganised sectors ;
- illiterate and semi-literate non-working women ;
- women who have literacy, but who need to be helped to acquire sufficient awareness, skill and confidence to put their talent to socio-economic use.

Priority programmes of non-formal education so far implemented or being planned, fall under three categories :

- Functional literacy linked to development
- Non-formal education for young people in the age-group 15-25
- Non-formal education for girls in the age-group 6-14.

There are several other programmes as well, but either they have not got the same level of priority or they are at initial stages of preparation.

Functional Literacy

(a) Farmers Functional Literacy in food producing areas.

An experiment in functional literacy for farmers including farm women has been in implementation since 1969-70. It is the biggest country-wide programme of non-formal education linked to development—in this case to increased agricultural production and to rural development in general. Functional literacy is one of the three components of the integrated project of Farmers Training and Functional Literacy jointly operated by the Ministries of Agriculture, Education and Information and Broadcasting. The other two components are farmers training and farm broadcasting. The project is based on the premise that for the successful execution of a developmental activity, human resources inputs are as essential as physical inputs and that the learner will be interested in literacy if it comes to him as part of a process of modernising and improving agricultural techniques, as well as of promoting conditions and premises in rural environments in general.

The programme has been in implementation in nearly 100 selected districts in which the high yield varieties of crops have been in cultivation. More than 4,50,000 farmers and farm women have already benefitted from this programme. The degree of participation of farming women varies, however, from area to area.

Functional literacy programme has now become a part of the general adult education strategy in the country. It is being enlarged in the Fifth Plan (1974-75) to several more districts to cover many more beneficiaries and linked to other developmental programmes such as dry farming, small marginal farming, industrial development, slum improvement, family life and family planning etc. Special programmes will be developed relating functional literacy to the socio-economic needs of women's groups in different areas.

(b) Special Functional Literacy Progromme for Women

This scheme which is proposed to be introduced during the year 1975-76 is intended for women in the age-group 15-45. Special priority will be given to women in the age-group 15-35 in rural and backward areas, urban slums etc. The objective of the scheme is to enable illiterate women to acquire skills through functional literacy programmes and to participate in the developmental efforts of the community; to become aware of modern methods of health and hygiene and population control, and to play their role as citizens.

(c) Literacy linked to trades and employment preparation

Several voluntary organisations are increasingly adopting the functional approach in their adult education programmes for women and relating them to

specific economic activities. The Khadi (handspun cloth) and Village Industries Commission, for example, organises functional literacy programmes for the large numbers of women spinners it employs. The objectives of the programme are to enable illiterate women to read, write and compute ; to give functional literacy to the semi-literates to equip literate spinners with higher techinical and vocational knowledge and skills, to enable them to understand the machines and other tools which they handle and operate ; to acquaint the learners with scientific processes involved in production ; and to provide citizenship and continuing education.

Nonformal Education

(a) Programme for youth, men and women, in the 15-25 age-group

This represents a major educational strategy in the Fifth Plan to provide continuing learning opportunities to the large numbers of men and women who have not had the benefit of a full-time formal education. Priority is being given to those in the age-group 15 to 25 as they are the more sensitive and productive segment of the community.

The scheme seeks to co-relate all nonformal educational efforts with the environmental situation and the needs of the youth.

The programme will be diversified and environmentally based. The content and methods will correspond to the local needs and the learners' characteristics and aims. The curriculum will include information and knowledge about the living environment and the development process in the country; basic knowledge and understanding of various social, economic, scientific and technological changes in the midst of which youth live and work, and to which they have to adjust in terms of knowledge, skills ; and elementary principles of health and hygiene and introductory vocational and occupational skills such as will prepare youth for employment and self-employment.

The emphasis will be on indentification and development of aptitudes and attitudes for problem solving and for active participation in the surrounding environment.

(b) An experimental programme on nonformal education for rural women

An action-oriented research project of nonformal education for rural women has been in implementation since 1972, in villages in four blocks in Mehboobnagar district in Andhra Pradesh (South India). It has been conducted by the Council for Social Development, New Delhi with the support of Government of India and UNICEF.

The primary objective was to develop, through experimental processes, a comprehensive programme aimed at decreasing infant mortality and morbidity, improving physical health and nutrition status of young children, increasing the ability of rural women to acquire more useful knowledge, and of fostering their family's health and well being, particularly of their children.

The first two phases of the project have been completed and the report of the experiment is under preparation. It is hoped that the project will provide some guidelines for a package of integrated programmes of education, health and nutrition services for wider application.

(c) Nonformal education programme for working women

Some exploratory experience are also available in organising nonformal education programmes for working women. Two programmes deserve mention :

(i) Workers social education institutes

There are two such institutes located in semi-urban areas which have large conglomerations of workers, mostly unskilled and largely illiterate, such as those who work in textile mills or bidi (indigeneous cigarette) rolling etc., a sizeable proportion of them being women. These institutes try to organise educational programmes related to the working and living environment of these workers.

(ii) Polyvalent adult education for urban workers

This is a unique experiment being carried on in one centre in Bombay, a highly industrialised city, with a heavy concentration of working population at all levels of literacy and skills of lack or them. The objective of the Centre's programme is to organise a variety of diversified multi-faceted (polyvalent) programmes of continuing general and vocational education for workers in organised and unorganised sectors, in cooperation with employing agencies, and to stimulate similar efforts in other industrial centres in the country. Men as well as women workers are offered these programmes, although there is much scope for intensifying the participation of women workers.

(d) Condensed courses of education for employment and vocational training of adult women

There is another nonformal education programme started about 7 years ago with the main objective of preparing a large number of trained women to work in rural areas in various development schemes. This scheme was expected to achieve two goals at the same time : to make available educated adult women for working in rural areas as teachers, welfare workers, Gram Sevikas etc., and

also to provide employment to large numbers of deserving adult women to supplement their family income. Financial assistance is given to voluntary welfare and educational institutions for organising these courses.

The courses are of two year duration and prepare candidates for the middle school examination and the high school examination according to the entry qualifications. Women in the age-group 18-30 are admitted. Non-residential and residential courses are offered. Teachers are full-time or part-time. Most of the women who have been trained through these courses have been able to find employment in rural areas.

Nonformal education for girls in the age-group 6 14

As stated in earlier sections, in spite of all the arduous efforts made so far to universalise primary education, in the age-groups 6-11 and 11-14, a large number of children are still out of school. (See Table 3 Section IV). Further, out of the children enrolled, there are heavy drop-outs. A major segment of these children is that of those who for various socio-economic reasons are unable to avail of a full-time formal system of education. Programmes of nonformal education are, therefore, being organised both for children who have never entered schools and for those who dropped out of the formal system.

The curriculm places emphasis on work experience which is of particular relevance in the case of girls. A pilot project is being conducted in two centres in northern India. Sequential units are prepared, each unit consisting of community activities, work experience, problems of literacy and numeracy, general knowledge, skills, values and attitudes.

*** *** ***

Possibilities of nonformal education for achieving a breakthrough in the participation of women in educational programmes are infinite. It is, however, a new unexplored area and much imaginative and innovative effort is needed before successful methodologies are worked out. It is a challenging and complex task, calling for the mobilisation of much untapped resources of men, materials and expertise. The exploration of ways and modalities for non-formal education as well as experimentation with various groups and in different environments, are some of the major tasks and intentions for the next period of educational development of India.

VII. SOME AFTER-THOUGHTS

Valuable experiences are now available in almost all countries concerning women's advancement, equality, participation, education, emancipations and liberation. Several considerations and conclusions flow from achieved results, unfinished tasks, unrewarded efforts, many dead-ends, impediments and protracted struggles.

However, there are—in India as well as elsewhere—several more questions remaining unanswered and many more issues which baffle solution.

1

Educational advancement and social promotion of women are in a vicious circle. Even most progressive forces, political and social, have had some obstacles both in the society and in women's lack of knowledge and awareness, both in social traditionalism and in the unpreparedness of women themselves, which prevented them from achieving the wanted and, often, the needed. How to break this vicious cirele ? Where to start ? What is the active role that education can play in that game, compared to the passive role it has in reflecting the contradictions, backwardness and evils of each society.

2

Will the acquisition of educational necessarily enhance women's participation in national development ? Does education really equip her to seriously participate in a socio-economic sense ?

Not necessarily. At least not until education has consiously prepared her for it. A large proportion of educated women do not put their education to social use or even to any use at all. A majority of them are unmindful of their social responsibilities and consider their educational equipment as little more than an accomplishment. Even when they put it to economic use, its social overtones are lost on them.

But unutilised woman power is a loss to the society, its development and national economy. It also acts as an anti-education force since so much educational investment is unutilised or under-utilised. Lack of economic compulsion

has itself been one of the reasons for the slow progress of women's education. It is essential that women get more possibilities for economic, social and civic participation, as a pre-requisite for more interest in education and training. It is essential as well that women are made aware of their socio-economic obligations. Women's education at all levels needs to be much more vigorously oriented to economic and social issues. Society as a whole also needs to be educated to expect socio-economic contribution from women on equal terms.

3

Is educating the women only a matter of "converting" the woman ? What about the attitude of society as a whole towards or against women's equality and participation ? What about men's attitudes to women's education ? If the man of the house does not approve of the woman's participation in educational programmes or social participation, nothing will induce the woman to cross his will. And few men will agree and fewer still will positively encourage if such participation is going to: (i) lessen their comfort; (ii) deflate their ego or social importance ; or (iii) place the burden of children's and home care on them.

Working with exclusive women's group is often, therefore, self-defeating. Any strategy for promoting women's education must necessarily include a simultaneous and powerful programme of men's education on the need for women's education, the place and role of woman in society, or her own identity and of the benefits that her education would bring to the family and ultimately to the society. Perhaps one important approach to women's education might be to accelerate men's education which would itself help to dispel many attitudes unfavourable to women's education. Nevertheless, there is a need in many instances for separate, well-defined programme particularly for women. If educational strategies are to truly reach segments of women hitherto ignored, they — particularly the diversified nonformal programmes — will have to be designed and oriented to women and not to be an incidental and peripheral adjunct to men's programmes.

4

Once women have entered the education process and their horizons have widened, it is only logical that they would wish to express themselves. Adequate avenues and organised outlets would need to be provided for such expressions in constructive social and community activities.

Such participation sometimes causes family tensions and alienations, and in extreme cases might even disrupt homes. How does the system deal with such

situations ? Watch helplessly from the sidelines ? Join issue and fight a social battle ? Educate the whole family and the community and provoke community action ?

5

Motivation to learn is at a very low level among women in rural areas and a major impediment in ensuring their voluntary and sustained participation in educational programmes. In reality they see no particular advantage in education. How is it going to change their lives ? What does it give them which they do not have now ? Most of what education gives is in terms of intangible concepts and distant goals which convey little meaning to them — what is of immediate concern is whether education can help them in improving their economic position and in raising their occupational skills. Educational programmes for women can have holding power only if they are well coordinated with development plans and economic prospects.

6

The education of the non-working women have certain special dimensions. They constitute the majority of women, and a more apathetic group. They are the more sheltered, relatively more economically secure, and hence more sceptic of the need for education. What kind of educational programmes and methodology will reach them through the walls of social unconcern and domestic absorption ? What content, what technique would make them develop interests beyond the confines of home and family, and see the need for social relationship? This is the big challenge.

7

Studies have shown that the number of women participating in educational programmes is in direct proportion to educated women workers in the locality. This in turn depends upon the percentage of women literates in the population. This is a vicious circle. How do we break it? Women coming with urban values and attitudes are unable to establish the same rapport and communication with rural women as rural women themselves can. If women's education programmes have to make substantial headway, one of the first pre-requisites would appear to be to build a body of informed and enlightened women workers from among the rural areas themselves.

However, there appears to be one risk to be guarded against. Women workers recruited from the rural areas are mostly at a low level of educational and professional competence and, therefore, unable to raise women learners to any better level of education and socio-economic awareness, than what they

themselves possess. The constant reorientation and upgrading of women workers is essential to make them fully informed about scientific, technological and socio-economic factors, and their implications for women's education.

8

What kind of a promotional, developmental programme would be most appropriate for women? Should it include literacy? Should it be based solely on information and enlightenment ?

Will this be adequate to give women sufficient knowledge and competence to become aware of socio-economic trends and forces and to ultimately participate in such activities ? Does this not place her at the mercy of chance? How much of this knowledge can be retained ? How will she keep up with the fast changing knowledge, techniques and skills ?

Can women, many of whom live below subsistence level and for whom the battle for survival is all-consuming, be interested in education such as what the system offers ? What incentive do they have for participation and development? What does 'development' mean to them in day-to-day terms, if it cannot assure them of the minimum food, clothing and shelter by which man lives ? Any massive effort for women's education, ignoring the need to generate employment opportunities and employable skills cannot make much headway.

9

What should be the content of the curriculum for women's education, formal and nonformal?

There is still considerable ambivalence towards this subject. The issues are: whether the curriculum should be indentical to that of boys or whether it should be different? If so, how different? Will such differentiation isolate woman from the main stream of social and economic participation? Will it push her back into domesticity instead of liberating her from it?

Even when there is no overt differentiation, in practice girls are induced and directed to such options as result in 'inferior' courses of study and leave them inadequately equipped for understanding social issues, or for pursuing other than soft jobs.

In programmes of nonformal education, there is a tendency among curriculum makers to make the curriculum synonymous with skills in house keeping, child care, tailoring and embroidery with a bit of civic knowledge thrown in for comfort. In other words, the programme is again "in-turned" and home-and child-oriented and not extroverted towards society, and the share and responsibi-

lity of woman in it. The result : most women are not, although they should be, equipped through these programmes for an informed and intelligent participation in solving *general problems* and in economic or social transformations of the society *as a whole.*

Attitudes about women's role or non-role in social issues are deeply ingrained and unconsciously influence curriculla, programmes and methodologies. Nevertheless, it is necessary that educational programmes do prepare woman for *her* specific role in the family, in the local community and in the national develop ment and help her to understand and solve *her* problems.

10

And so on...every day and in every country new questions and reflections, many of them difficult and unanswerable, most of them intriguing and challenging, are rising up along with each slow and painful, but irresistible, step towards women's equality, advancement and emancipation.

EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF LITERATES, MEN AND WOMEN, 1971